



**Special School District
Homeless Services
Program Evaluation**

Mary Lee Burlemann, Chair

Board Approved: March 9, 2010



Homeless Services Standard Program Evaluation

Executive Summary

As required by the Missouri School Improvement Plan (MSIP) standards, school districts must evaluate Homeless Services biennially. The questions approved by the Board of Education for the present program evaluation were as follows: *How many students were identified as homeless during the 2009-2010 school year? What services and supports are available and what has been provided to students who become homeless during the school year?* Based on stakeholder review of the data, strengths, concerns and recommendations are noted.

Results

Strengths of program/service:

In accordance with state and federal law, Special School District has a process in place to actively seek and identify homeless students and ensure that they have access to a free, appropriate public education.

Special School District reports data regarding homeless students to DESE on an annual basis. Information required in the census includes (a) number of students identified, (b) grade level, and (c) primary nighttime residence.

Special School District has developed an internal tracking system and process to monitor what services (e.g., transportation, special education, referrals to agencies, etc.) homeless students are receiving.

The Special School District Homeless Coordinator meets quarterly with other area Homeless Coordinators to discuss topics of mutual interest regarding the needs of homeless students thereby creating a network of persons interested in providing immediate response to families facing a housing crisis.

Special School District social workers provide a wide range of services to students whose families are facing a housing crisis. Services provided may include parent contacts, referral to outside resources, and participation in school conferences.

Special School District building administrators and teachers are familiar with the process for referring a self-contained student who becomes homeless for services and transportation.

Concerns regarding program/service:

Families are reluctant to come forward to identify themselves as homeless for a variety of reasons. There is a stigma associated with homelessness, but families need to know that there are services available to them in order to maintain a consistent school life for their children even if home life is in crisis.



Homeless Services Standard Program Evaluation

School district Homeless Coordinators need to respond collaboratively when information becomes available about a homeless situation. The child's prompt return to school should be of foremost importance. The previous program evaluation (2008) indicated arranging timely transportation was somewhat of a concern. However, since that time collaboration among homeless coordinators has improved greatly in this area. The quarterly Homeless Coordinator meetings hosted by the St. Louis County Homeless Services agency provide a mechanism to discuss and address concerns that arise.

Recommendations regarding program/service:

Families need to be made aware that they are entitled to the same programs and services their children had prior to becoming homeless and that transportation to and from the school of origin or the school of best interest will be provided.

Social workers and teachers are usually the first to become aware of changes in a family's circumstances. An effort should be made to encourage the Homeless Coordinator or a representative in each school district to attend the quarterly meetings of Homeless Coordinators in an effort to work collaboratively and keep abreast of any changes in the McKinney-Vento Act. Quarterly meetings include updates provided by DESE representatives and are hosted by the St. Louis County Homeless Services agency.

The continued use of the NCLB Checklist and SSD internal tracking system/process to monitor services and supports provided to homeless students will be pursued. The coordinators of the Federal Programs and Social Work departments will continue to be notified on a regular basis as to homeless students in the district.



Homeless Services Standard Program Evaluation

Program Evaluation Question(s)

How many students were identified as homeless during the 2009-2010 school year?

What services and supports are available and what has been provided to students who become homeless during the school year?

I. Program/Service Information

1. Name of Program or Services: Homeless Services

2. Personnel Responsible for Evaluation: Mary Lee Burlemann, Area Coordinator

3. Demographic Description of Program:

Homeless services are provided through an administrator at the Central Office, supported by other staff and social workers. Students are typically identified by their teachers and/or social workers. Transportation to and from the school of origin or the school of best interest is then arranged. Students identified as homeless are automatically eligible for free/reduced lunch. Students are connected with the SSD social worker who may be able to provide in-school support and other community resources to the family.

4. Date of Evaluation: February 2010

5. Goal/Objective of Program/Services:

To identify homeless students and ensure that they have immediate access to a free, appropriate public education in the school of origin or in the school of best interest.

6. Brief description of relationship between program goals, CSIP and MSIP Standards:

Program goals are related to CSIP and MSIP standards. Information gathered about homeless students would ensure that homeless students are afforded the full range of educational programs in the district (MSIP Standards 6.3.4, 8.1.1, and 8.3.1).

II. Evaluation Criteria for Programs/Services Offered

Federal and State Requirements

SSD Identification Process

Homeless Children and Youth Census: DESE

NCLB Self-Monitoring Checklist

Services and Supports Provided



Homeless Services Standard Program Evaluation

III. Description of Stakeholders Engagement in Program Evaluation:

The Homeless Services Program Evaluation Committee consisted of SSD staff, community members, and a parent (Table 1). The committee members conferred via telephone and fax machine due to on-going communication.

Table 1. Homeless Services Program Evaluation Committee

Member	Role
Mary Lee Burlemann	Area Coordinator, SSD
Dan Kelly	Principal, SSD
Bob Molitor	Area Coordinator, SSD
Jo Ann Levering	Area Coordinator, SSD, Homeless Coordinator, Affton SD
Shalonda Haynes	Family Haven Community in Partnership Program
Deidre Thomas-Moore	Students in Transition Program, SLPS
Andrea Allen	Parent
Cheryl Thomas	Social Worker, Rockwood School District

IV. Results

Federal and State Requirements

Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, reauthorized by Title X, Part C of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, ensures educational rights and protections for children and youth experiencing homelessness. This federal law ensures that children experiencing homelessness can enroll, attend, and succeed in school and preschool programs. The Missouri State Plan for Homeless Children and Youth serves as legislation which enacts this law and assures that homeless children within the state are afforded a free and appropriate education and have an opportunity to meet the same challenging academic achievement standards to which all students are held. The Missouri State Plan defines a homeless individual as one who:

- A. lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and
- B. includes
 - i. children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternate adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
 - ii. children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation;
 - iii. children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations, or similar settings.



Homeless Services Standard Program Evaluation

Children and youth in homeless situations are entitled to services comparable to those offered to other students (e.g., special education, gifted and talented, limited English proficiency, free/reduced lunch, etc.). The Missouri School Improvement Program monitors compliance with all policies and procedures pertaining to homeless children and youth.

SSD Identification Process

The Special School District, in accordance with state and federal law and the Missouri State Plan, actively seeks to identify homeless students and ensure that they have access to a free, appropriate public education. Posters are on display in all SSD special education and technical education buildings as well as the Central Office giving public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youth. These are places where potentially homeless families might be. SSD has board-adopted policies and procedures that ensure there are no barriers to enrollment, attendance and success of homeless children and youth. When a parent seeks to place a child in an SSD special education school or technical school, the parent is asked to identify whether the family falls into homeless status. If the response is in the affirmative, the principal or social worker alerts the Board-approved homeless coordinator of the family situation. These efforts are coordinated with school personnel and community agencies. Identification may also begin with contact from a component district representative, a social worker or a parent alerting the Board-approved Homeless Coordinator of homeless status. Again, efforts are coordinated with school personnel and community agencies. The SSD Homeless Coordinator is familiar with the definition of a homeless child and duties related to the homeless federal statute and other school personnel have been notified that the SSD homeless coordinator is responsible for these duties. These duties are defined by NCLB and the SSD Board policy. Homeless children and youth who attend both Title I and non-Title I schools are entitled to Title I.A services. Title I funds are set aside for homeless children and youth. The majority of homeless students receive services through the component district. Special School District becomes involved when a student receives self-contained (more than 60%) services or attends a Technical School. Homelessness is determined by the homeless coordinators in the district of residence and the district where the child attends school. There is a Board-approved process for the resolution of disagreements about homeless eligibility and placement with procedures for homeless families and youth to appeal decisions made by the homeless coordinators including written explanations, clearly defined processes and provision of services during the appeal.

Each identified homeless child or youth is to be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the district, either the component district program or service or through Special School District programs and services. The Board-approved homeless coordinator, principals, coordinators, teachers and social workers need to make sure that these services are being provided. Services to homeless students may include transportation, educational services for which the child meets the eligibility criteria, such as educational programs for disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, gifted and talented students, vocational and technical education programs, school meal programs, preschool programs, before- and after-school programs, and programs for students with limited English proficiency. Homeless students are



Homeless Services Standard Program Evaluation

not to be segregated in a separate school or placed in a separate program within a school based on a child’s status as homeless.

After eligible status is determined, transportation issues are addressed. If it is in the best interest of the homeless child or youth to attend the school of origin, transportation to and from that school is provided. If the student’s temporary housing is outside of the district of the school of origin, the Homeless Coordinator for Special School District will work with the Homeless Coordinator of the school district of origin to arrange for, and share the costs for transportation.

All student records are maintained so that appropriate services can be given to the student, so that necessary referrals can be made, and so that records can be transferred in a timely manner if a homeless child or youth enters a new school district. In addition, the Special School District Homeless Coordinator regularly attends quarterly meetings of area Homeless Coordinators to discuss topics of interest and network with professionals responsible for providing immediate response to families facing a housing crisis.

As homeless students are identified, the Homeless Coordinator sends a list of students who are in attendance-keeping programs, SSD buildings or Technical Education buildings, to the Federal Programs Coordinator and the Effective Practice Specialist (EPS) for Social Work. The social work EPS will forward the names to the SSD social workers. The social workers will contact the family to inquire about any services that might be needed. Social workers in conjunction with the Federal Programs Administrator determine the best way to meet the needs of the homeless child using Title I.A funds that have been set aside expressly for that purpose.

SSD Homeless Census Data

Special School District reports data related to students identified as homeless to DESE on an annual basis. Reporting occurs via Core Data submissions and the NCLB Self-Monitoring Checklist (<http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/fedprog/documents/MO5002336.pdf>). Table 2 reflects the number of students identified as homeless in Special School District for the past 6 years.

Table 2. Homeless Student Census: Special School District

School Year	Number of Students
2004-2005	37
2005-2006	26
2006-2007	26
2007-2008	24
2008-2009	41
2009-2010	35*

* Year-to-Date Total (Aug-Jan)

As noted in Table 2, the number of students identified as homeless has increased during the past



Homeless Services Standard Program Evaluation

two years as compared to identified students in 2005-2008. Of the 35 homeless students identified thus far during the 2009-2010 school year, 6 students have now achieved a permanent residence and are no longer homeless as of this evaluation. Special School District is required to designate the grade level and primary nighttime residence of homeless children and youth at the time of initial identification. Grade level data of the 35 students identified thus far for 2009-2010 is reported in Table 3. Primary nighttime residence is reported in Table 4.

Table 3. Homeless Student Census: Grade Level

Grade Level	Frequency	Percent
K	1	2.9
1	3	8.6
2	3	8.6
3	1	2.9
4	1	2.9
5	1	2.9
6	2	5.7
7	1	2.9
8	1	2.9
9	2	5.7
10	2	5.7
11	8	22.9
12	9	25.7
Total	35	100

As noted in Table 3, the majority of homeless students and youth identified thus far for the 2009-2010 school year are at the 11th and 12th grade level.

Table 4. Homeless Student Census: Primary Nighttime Residence

Primary Nighttime Residence: DESE Categories	Frequency	Percent
Shelters, transitional housing, awaiting foster care	3	8.6
Doubled-up (including runaway youth or unaccompanied youth who live with relatives or friends due to being homeless)	27	77.1
Unsheltered (e.g., cars, parks, campgrounds, abandoned buildings, temporary trailer, substandard or inadequate housing)	0	0
Hotels/Motels	5	14.3
Total	35	100

The majority (77%) of homeless students identified thus far for 2009-2010 fall into the “doubled-up” category with regards to primary nighttime residence. No students have been identified in



Homeless Services Standard Program Evaluation

the “unsheltered” category at this point in the school year.

The following are the services and supports that SSD reports on in MOSIS for the data collection requirements. School social workers keep track of the students on their caseloads and what interventions they are providing and then report to the Social Work Effective Practice Specialist. Services and supports received by the 35 homeless students identified thus far in 2009-2010 are reported in Table 5.

Table 5. Homeless Students: Services and Supports Received

Services and Supports	N	Percent
Free / Reduced Lunch	35	100
Transportation	34	97.1
Special Education	29	82.9
Counseling / Social Work	27	77.1
Staff Professional Development and Awareness	20	57.1
Referral for Medical, Dental and Other Health	16	45.7
School Supplies	15	42.9
Referral to Agency (e.g., Legal Services, Housing Resource Center, etc.)	15	42.9
Clothing	9	25.7
Parent Education: Rights and Resources	9	25.7
Vocational/Technical	6	17.1

As noted in Table 5, students identified as homeless receive a wide variety of services and supports. The most common of these include free/reduced lunch, transportation, and special education services.

V. Discussion

Based on the review of data, the following strengths, concerns and recommendations were identified.

Strengths of program/service:

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Homeless Services Standard Program Evaluation

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Concerns regarding program/service:

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School district Homeless Coordinators need to respond collaboratively when information becomes available about a homeless situation. The child's prompt return to school should be of foremost importance. The previous program evaluation (2008) indicated arranging timely transportation was somewhat of a concern. However, since that time collaboration among homeless coordinators has improved greatly in this area. The quarterly Homeless Coordinator meetings hosted by the St. Louis County Homeless Services agency provide a mechanism to discuss and address concerns that arise.

Recommendations regarding program/service:

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Homeless Services Standard Program Evaluation

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Person responsible to champion action plan: Mary Lee Burlemann

Timeframe for reporting updates to Board of Education: Biennial

Date: _____
Signature of Administrator Responsible for Chairing Evaluation